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FIREFIGHTER RECOGNITION PROGRAM

May, 1973

Alberta
Lands and Forests
Hon. Dr. Allan A. Warrack
Minister

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OBJECTIVE

To recognize the important and special capabilities of Alberta firefighters, with emphasis on contributions by Alberta's native people, in ways that complement effective firefighting in Alberta.

BACKGROUND

Alberta has some of the most able and dedicated firefighter individuals, squads, and crews anywhere. The success of Alberta's forest fire control efforts depends upon these people. While proper training is essential, the Government feels it important to recognize the achievement and dedication of its firefighters.

Fire control operations in Alberta involve a variety of Alberta citizens. But the firefighters are predominantly native citizens of the Province. Over the past decade approximately 3,500 natives have been trained and certified as firefighters; in 1972, 568 men were trained and certified in various firefighter categories. These fire training courses are given in the field and at the Forest Technology School in Hinton.

Historically the recognition of native people has generally been in terms of the white rather than native culture. One result may be that significant native achievements and accomplishments can be overlooked. The Government of Alberta concludes that specific recognition is due the native firefighters of Alberta.

FIREFIGHTER RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Beginning in 1973, the Alberta Government will implement the following program in recognition of Alberta firefighter dedication and special capabilities:

1. Firefighter Jackets--Each certified graduate of the training course will be supplied with a special jacket for off-duty wear.

2. Crests and Decals--Distinctive crests and decals will be used to identify firefighters as to their place of origin. The crests will be used on jackets while the decals will be placed on the hardhats worn by all firefighters.

3. Boot Supply--Many persons reporting for firefighting duty do not possess proper footwear. Suitable boots or boot allowance will be supplied to all certified firefighters who become actively involved in fighting forest fires.

4. Coveralls--At present the Alberta Forest Service supplies coveralls (international orange color) to trained firefighter crews that are transported from their home area for fire action. These coveralls have an imprinted forestry crest and are especially favored by the natives. The coverall supply program will be expanded to provide coveralls for every certified firefighter.

5. Film and Public Relations--A short film will be produced to promote the training and recognition programs. Other public relations methods will also be employed.

6. Opportunity Liaison--Firefighters displaying interest and ability for more complex jobs or for advanced training in forestry work will be given added opportunity to improve themselves. Close liaison will be maintained between the field and the educational institutions and areas of job opportunity.

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The cost of the 1973 firefighter recognition program is estimated to be $136,000. The Government views the program as an excellent investment in two ways. First, recognizing the specialized skills and worthwhile firefighting efforts will instill added pride and enrichment to the individual lives and communities--especially to native people and communities where added recognition is due and merited. Many of Alberta's native firefighters go on to become local leaders in their communities. Second, the firefighter recognition program will complement fire control efforts through the further training initiatives and opportunities that are provided.